

Claims

[c1] A cut away vest comprising:

- a first torso panel;
- a second torso panel;
- shoulder straps connected to the first panel extending to the second torso panel, at least one said shoulder strap having a free end and at least one first connector element;
- a waist belt having at least one side portion with a free end connecting a lower portion of one of the first torso panel and second torso panel to the other of the first torso panel and second torso panel, said belt side portion having at least one second connector element;
- at least one connector device connected to the second torso panel and selectively operably associated with a respective at least one of the first and second connector elements; and
- a retainer system having a flexible retainer element carried by at least one of the first and second torso panels to releasably retain the first and second connector elements associated each with a respective connector device, said retainer system including at least first and second grip members each operably associated with a said

flexible retainer element, said grip members being normally positioned on an assembled vest in spaced relationship and adjacent the front torso panel, said grip members being operable, independent of one another, when sufficiently moved to release the first and second connector elements each from its respective connector device.

[c2] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 1 including a cummerbund associated with at least one of the first and second torso panels and having at least one side portion with a first free end overlying a portion of the second torso panel adjacent at least one said connector device, said cummerbund having at least one third connector element associated with a respective said cummerbund side portion with a free end and selectively operably associated with at least one said connector device and releasably retained to the second torso panel by the flexible retainer element.

[c3] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 2 wherein the first, second and third connector elements each including at least one hole through a portion of said at least one shoulder strap, at least one waist belt side portion and at least one said cummerbund side portion respectively.

[c4] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 3 wherein each said

shoulder strap having a free end and at least one first connector element, said waist belt having at least two side portions with free ends with each waist belt side portion having at least one second connector element and said cummerbund having at least two side portions with free ends with each cummerbund side portion having at least one third connector element, said at least one connector device being one connector device operably associated with at least one of said first connector elements in each of the shoulder straps, at least one said second connector element in each of said waist belt side portions and at least one said third connector element in each of the cummerbund side portions.

[c5] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 4 wherein the first, second and third connector elements each including at least one hole and said connector device including a flexible loop attached to the second torso panel selectively extendable through holes of the first, second and third connector elements.

[c6] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 5 wherein each of the shoulder straps, waist belt side portions and cummerbund side portions having a plurality of first, second and third connector elements respectively in spaced apart relation to provide adjustability of length of the shoulder straps, waist belt, and cummerbund.

[c7] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 1 wherein the flexible retainer element including a single flexible cable extending from the connector device to the first torso panel, said flexible retainer element also including a handle portion adjacent an end of the cable and carried by the first torso panel.

[c8] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 7 wherein there is a single flexible loop extendible through holes comprising the first, second and third connector elements in the shoulder straps, waist belt and cummerbund respectively.

[c9] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 7, wherein said cable having opposite end portions, the first grip being fixed to the cable at one end portion, said second grip being normally positioned on the cable at an intermediate position between the opposite end portions.

[c10] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 9, wherein said second grip being mounted on said cable and movable along the length of said cable.

[c11] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 10, wherein the first grip being permanently secured to the cable.

[c12] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 11, wherein said

vest including a chest portion and said second grip being normally positioned adjacent said chest portion.

[c13] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 9, wherein said vest including a chest portion and the cable having an exposed portion adjacent to said chest portion with said second grip being positioned on the cable at the exposed portion of the cable.

[c14] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 9, including a pair of opposed surfaces defining a pocket positioned adjacent an armhole defining edge of a said torso panel, said pocket being adapted to receive at least a portion of said second grip therein.

[c15] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 14 including a fastener device releasably retaining at least a portion of the second grip within said pocket.

[c16] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 15, wherein the fastener device including one of a hook or loop fastener material member positioned within said pocket for releasable fastening engagement with a hook or loop fastener material member fixed to said second grip.

[c17] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 9, wherein said second grip including a loop member having a through opening, said cable being fixed to said second grip by

passing through the through opening of the loop member.